

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:

a flexible cover having a general tubular configuration for covering at least a portion of an elongated medical instrument;

an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible cover, the insertion element being selectively expandable from a closed position to an open position to facilitate insertion of the elongated medical instrument;

a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion element and separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches;

a pair of substantially parallel score lines formed in the cover and aligned with the pair of substantially parallel perforations, the pair of substantially parallel score lines extending from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover and separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches; and

a tab coupled to the insertion element proximate the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby the tab is adapted to remove a portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations and a portion of the flexible cover between the pair of substantially parallel score lines when a pulling force is applied to the tab.

2. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end is closed.

3. (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes an aperture.

4. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

5. (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the insertion element is coupled within the first end of the flexible cover.

6. (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

7. (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

8. (Original) A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:

- a flexible cover configured to cover at least a portion of a medical instrument;
- an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible cover;
- a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion element; and
- a pair of substantially parallel score lines formed in the cover and aligned with the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby a portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations is removable from the insertion element and a portion of the flexible cover between the pair of substantially parallel score lines is removable from the flexible cover when a force is applied to the portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations.

9. (Original) The system of Claim 8, further comprising a tab coupled to the insertion element proximate the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby the tab is adapted to remove the portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the portion of the cover between the pair of substantially parallel score lines when a pulling force is applied to the tab.

10. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the flexible cover is of a generally tubular configuration and is formed from a polymer.

11. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end is closed.

12. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes an aperture.

13. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

14. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is formed from cardboard.

15. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is selectively expandable from a closed position to an open position.

16. (Original) The system of Claim 8, further comprising a pair of gripping apertures formed in the insertion element.

17. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is coupled within the first end of the flexible cover.

18. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

19. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the pair of substantially parallel score lines are each separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

20. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover.

21. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to an intermediate portion of the flexible cover.

22. (Original) The system of Claim 8, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

23. (Original) A method for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:

covering at least a portion of a medical instrument with a flexible cover, the flexible cover having an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible cover;

removing a portion of the insertion element disposed between a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion element by applying a force to the portion of the insertion element disposed between the pair of substantially parallel perforations; and

removing an elongated portion of the flexible cover disposed between a pair of substantially parallel score lines formed in the flexible cover and aligned with the pair of substantially parallel perforations in the insertion element by continuing to apply the force to the portion of the insertion element disposed between the pair of substantially parallel perforations.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 23, wherein the covering step comprises expanding the insertion element from a closed position to an open position, and inserting the portion of the medical instrument through the insertion element and into the flexible cover.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the pair of substantially parallel score lines are each separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover.

27. (Original) The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to an intermediate portion of the flexible cover.

28. (Original) The method of Claim 23, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

29. (Original) A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:

- a flexible cover configured to cover at least a portion of a medical instrument;
- an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible cover;
- a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion element; and
- whereby a portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations is removable from the insertion element and a portion of the flexible cover is removable from the flexible cover when a force is applied to the portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations.

30. (Original) The system of Claim 29, further comprising a tab coupled to the insertion element proximate the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby the tab is adapted to remove the portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the portion of the cover when the force is applied to the tab.

31. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end is closed.

32. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes an aperture.

33. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

34. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein the insertion element is coupled within the first end of the flexible cover.

35. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

36. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations are separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

37. (Original) The system of Claim 29, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.